DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 619 FL 800 264

AUTHOR Chandler, Carolyn Ebel
TITLE Using Newspapers in the ESL Literacy Classroom. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for Limited-English-Proficient Adults, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-LE-90-02
PUB DATE Jul 90
CONTRACT RI89166001
NOTE 3p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Literacy; Class Activities; *English (Second Language); *Instructional Materials; *Literacy Education; *Newspapers
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

Newspapers can be inexpensive and useful tools in the literacy classroom, but newspapers written for native English speakers are not always appropriate for English-as-as-Second-Language (ESL) students. Adapting the newspaper to classroom instruction is a natural way to introduce students to cultural and linguistic concepts. The newspaper can be used for ESL students at all proficiency levels. Many practitioners have compiled detailed and level-appropriate lists of classroom activities for using the newspaper as text. The newspaper industry itself is providing materials for use in adult literacy classrooms. These efforts involve using the newspaper as curriculum. Nationally, newspaper groups have encouraged their local newspapers to develop literacy projects and coalitions. On a local level, newspaper groups cover literacy activities, provide free advertising space, and establish community-wide coalitions. Newspapers, a cultural and community constant in American life, can help newcomers acquire literacy skills and useful information at the same time. (VWL) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED321619

ERIC National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education
An Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse
ERIC Digest

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Using Newspapers in the ESL Literacy Classroom

Prepared by Carolyn Ebel Chandler
Independent Media Consultants

July 1990
EDO-LE-90-02

Newspapers can be very inexpensive and compelling "textbooks" for adult literacy development. For the newly arrived refugee or immigrant, the newspaper provides an introduction to the political, social, and business aspects of the local community. The newspaper can assist newcomers in finding a job, buying a car, taking advantage of sales, and choosing local entertainment. Incorporating newspapers into the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) literacy classroom offers the teacher authentic, practical, and easily accessible materials.

Newspapers in the ESL Literacy Classroom

While practitioners agree that newspapers can represent useful tools in the literacy classroom, they also recognize that newspaper articles written for native speakers are not always appropriate for ESL students. According to Virginia French Allen, an ESL specialist and literacy tutor, materials designed for native speakers of English are not equally suitable for ESL students with limited knowledge of English vocabulary and structure or limited experience with American life. "Many cultural, phonetic, and speaking cues which are readily apparent to native speakers must be developed for ESL students" (ANPA, 1989, p. 17).

Adapting the newspaper to classroom instruction is a natural way to introduce students to these cultural and linguistic concepts. In the past, creative teachers developed their own lessons around the newspaper; however, they often restricted this practice to advanced learners of English. In this way, beginning level students missed out on a natural source of meaningful linguistic and cultural "news."

But the newspaper can be used for ESL learners of all levels. For beginning students, the large-print headlines, recognizable symbols and numbers, and many color and black-and-white photographs can convey information that students understand. At an intermediate level, the newspaper provides exposure to print, to graphic devices, and to punctuation. Advanced students can read newspapers much as a native speaker would, skimming some articles, reading others completely, and discarding those parts of the newspaper of little interest to them. Many practitioners (Chavira, 1990; Hess, 1987; Salas-Isnardi, n.d.; Toben, 1987) have compiled detailed and level-appropriate lists of classroom activities for using the newspaper as text.

Activities for Beginning Students

- Have students cut out pictures of things they like in the newspaper and then write sentences about the pictures.
- Read a few scores from the sports page and have students write them down.
- Find numbers in newspaper advertisements that deal with money and have students practice reading the prices aloud.
- Using pictures found in the newspaper, have students write sentences about the pictures using prepositions to describe the spatial relationships.
- Discuss an issue found in an editorial that may be pertinent to students' lives.

Activities for Intermediate Students

- Have students circle words they do not understand and ask them to try to figure out the meaning from the context or look up the definition in the dictionary.
- Cut out headlines from various articles and have students match headlines with stories.
- Cut photo captions from photographs and have students match captions with photos.
- Analyze advertisements to discuss the way prices vary from store to store. Students may report their findings by writing a paragraph.
- Collect newspaper photographs of people and have students make up stories about the people.

Activities for Advanced Students

- Cut out several photographs of people and have students write descriptions of the people; let other students match the photographs with the descriptions.
- Work as a group to write a letter to the editor; more advanced students might write letters on their own.
- Follow a news item over a period of time and discuss the events that occur.
- Have students read an article that describes a problem and discuss the problem's cause and effects.
- Have students work in pairs, interviewing each other about an article in the newspaper.

The Role of Newspaper Publishers in Literacy

The newspaper industry itself is providing materials for use in adult ESL literacy classrooms. These efforts, some developed by newspaper publishers and others by literacy practitioners, involve using the newspaper as curriculum. This approach to literacy education is consistent with the recommendations of a recently released Educational Testing Service (ETS) study, "Reducing Illiteracy in California: Review of Effective Practices in Adult Literacy Programs," which recommends that teaching materials look and read like normal adult reading materials (paperback novels, newspapers, and manuals that do not announce their reading level on the cover) (ETS, 1989).

"The Houston Chronicle: Your ESL Source. A Source Guide for Adults Learning English as a Second Language," a curriculum developed by the *Houston Chronicle*, contains lessons for listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English, and requires no special materials other than the local newspaper (Winters & Orr, 1989).

The Los Angeles Daily News has developed a program for ESL and amnesty preparation that uses the newspaper as curriculum. Each section of the curriculum contains three levels of difficulty, so teachers may choose those tasks that are most appropriate for their students.

The Syracuse Newspaper's "Curriculum Modification for English as a Second Language" focuses on points of grammar in

FL900264

newspaper copy. It, too, is designed to assist in reading and language arts skill areas for students at various levels of literacy.

Other Newspaper Activities

Newspaper publishers are involved in other types of literacy activities as well. Some newspapers offer workplace literacy classes. *The Los Angeles Herald Examiner* runs special classes to teach literacy skills to its language-minority employees, using a learner-centered approach, with discussion based on photographs of employees using authentic materials at the worksite.

Fifty adults are enrolled in a computer-assisted literacy project designed by the *Los Angeles Times* for its employees, their families, and individuals from the surrounding community.

The Providence Journal in Providence, RI, offers a workplace literacy program for its employees seeking the General Equivalency Diploma (GED), releasing them for one hour twice a week to attend class.

The Patriot Ledger in Quincy, MA, assists a local human services agency in sponsoring an English class for Asian adults in the community. The class, "New Americans: Learning English, Becoming American," prepares students for the U.S. citizenship examination while teaching them English.

The Miami Herald publishes a Spanish language newspaper to appeal to the large Spanish-speaking community in Miami. To attract readers in Spanish-speaking homes, *El Nuevo Herald* is provided free with a subscription to the Miami Herald.

The Austin American-Statesman has produced a bilingual adult literacy handbook, *Roads to Literacy/Caminos Hacia La Alfabetizacion*, that contains listings in both Spanish and English of county literacy projects, instructional agencies, and community contacts for special literacy services.

Five adult literacy centers that offer tutoring, tutor training, tutor recruitment, and referrals to language-minority adults have been established by the Rio Grande Valley Group Newspapers (Harlingen, TX) of the Freedom Newspapers Group. Additionally, this group sponsors a "Ready to Read" workshop, using the newspaper as a text. In Brownsville, TX, a class meets twice weekly using this approach. The Rio Grande Valley Group Newspapers also produce a monthly newsletter and public service announcements and are involved in symposia and curricula design.

The editorial staff of the *Times-Herald Record* in Middletown, NY, conducts writing workshops in ESL classrooms. Students participate in a writing contest, with the winning entry published in a special supplement to the paper.

How Newspaper Groups Are Promoting Literacy

Nationally, newspaper groups have encouraged their local newspapers to develop literacy projects and coalitions. The Gannett Foundation, Knight, and Chicago Tribune Charities have funded state and community literacy activities. Newspaper membership associations, such as the American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation (ANPA), the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (SNPA), the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), and the International Circulation Managers Association (ICMA) encourage their member newspapers to sponsor reading activities. Newspapers in Education (NIE), a cooperative effort between newspapers and local schools, has existed as a newspaper-literacy initiative since the 1930s. The International Circulation Managers Association has recommended that every newspaper make available to community literacy programs "Ready to Read," a newspaper curriculum that comes with a teacher training session conducted by the author, Janet Fenholt (1987).

On a local level, newspapers cover literacy activities, provide free advertising space, and set up community-wide coalitions. Local newspapers also work closely with national groups in literacy campaigns, such as Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS) and the General Federation of Womens' Clubs.

Newspapers, a cultural and community constant in American life, can help newcomers acquire literacy skills and useful information at the same time.

References

American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) Foundation. (1989). *Newspapers and literacy . . . that all may read.* Washington, DC: Author.

Chavira, R. (1990, February). *Newsletter of the El Paso Community College.* (Available from the Communications Division, P.O. Box 20500, El Paso, TX, 79998, 915-594-2296.)

*Educational Testing Service (ETS). (1989). *Reducing illiteracy in California: Review of effective practices in adult literacy programs.* Final report submitted to the California State Department of Education, Pasadena, CA.

Fenholt, J. (1987). *Ready to Read.* Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing.

Hess, N. (1987). Newspapers in the English classroom: Stressing sociolinguistic communicative competence in an authentic framework. *English Teachers Journal, 35,* 70-71.

*Salas-Isnardi, F. (n.d.). Some ideas for the use of a newspaper in the E.L.A.P. class. Unpublished manuscript.

Toben, M. (1987). Using the newspaper in the classroom: A check list for intermediate and advanced classes. *English Teachers Journal, 35,* 79-82.

Winters, P., & Orr, S. (1989). *The Houston Chronicle: Your ESL source. A source guide for adults learning English as a second language.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 256 845)

For Further Reading

American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) Foundation. (1987). *Newspapers meet the challenge.* Washington, DC: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 300 835)

American Newspaper Publishers Association (ANPA) Foundation. (1983). *The Newspaper as an effective teaching tool.* Washington, DC: Author. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 236 690)

Ebel Chandler, C. (1988). Newspapers are major promoters of literacy through "Press to Read" and other efforts. *Presstime, 10,* 29-31.

Fitzgerald, M. (1989). Newspaper in Education reaches out to minorities, immigrants. *Editor & Publisher,* 26-27.

Gedye, K. (1982). The newspaper in ESL. *TESL Talk, 13,* 19-30. (ERIC Journal No. EJ 258 099)

Patrie, J. (1988). Comprehensible text: The daily newspaper at the beginning level. *TESL Talk, 18,* 135-141. (ERIC Journal No. EJ 369 022)

*Citations with an asterisk are currently being incorporated into the ERIC database by the National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education. Citations with an ED number may be obtained from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS), 3900 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304-6409, (800) 227-3742.

The National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education (NCLE), an Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse, is operated by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI 8916601. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.